The Gazette

ESTABLISHED IN 1872 FREEDOM COMMUNICATIONS

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OUR VIEW

Overreaction

Citizens group read too much into council's vague, unneeded resolution

If nothing else, Colorado for Family Values's unsuccessful petition drive, to clarify City Hall's employment policies, served to remind our local elected leaders of the perils of over-legislating. Granted, the group's effort otherwise was counterproductive.

In a way, you can't blame the organization for trying to get the City Council to spell out just what it had meant in its 1997 resolution against employment discrimination, including that which is "sexual," within city ranks. We'd guess the council members themselves weren't too sure about that word's connotation when they voted for the measure. And, surely, citizens deserve an explanation of any public policy enacted by those they've elected.

Only, absent a clear answer from the council, the group went to the public instead with a proposal to fine-tune the council resolution's language to indicate that "sexual" should refer only to gender, not sexual orientation. As we noted in this space earlier this year, that was an overreaction, and it's just as well this measure failed to make the ballot. Its backers conceded defeat this week in their attempt to garner sufficient signatures.

It was one thing to call on the council to make its edict clear. It's quite another to compound a lack of clarity with more legal verbiage.

Now that the group's citizens initiative has fallen short of making it onto the municipal ballot, it seems all the more ironic how the whole matter was blown out of proportion by all concerned. Ironic, because the council's resolution likely wasn't meant to be about gay rights in the first place.

Readers might recall that the council's resolution had come on the heels of concerns raised by Vice Mayor Leon Young concerning the hiring and treatment of racial minorities among the ranks of city employees. Seemingly, in part, to reassure Young and others concerned about discrimination, the council adopted this empty declaration.

Remember, the resolution is merely a statement by the council, not an enforceable policy. So why bother with such window dressing — unnecessarily stirring up passions along the way? If the council had meant to address specific concerns, loopholes, perhaps, in the city's hiring procedures regarding discrimination, it could have effected precisely such changes by amending whatever procedural rules were pertinent to the subject.

Unable to resist the urge to pass a feel-good public statement, the council drew the perhaps inevitable scrutiny of an organization like Colorado for Family Values.

We have a certain degree of faith that, by and large, the line managers in the various departments and agencies attached to City Hall are conscientious people who hire, fire, promote, award pay raises and make other personnel decisions in a manner that takes only employees' abilities into consideration. That's as it should be, of course.

If there are any exceptions to that rule, let the City Council deal with those at once.

The council's sweeping, open-ended declaration served only to incite those concerned about there being a hidden gay-rights agenda at work, which doesn't seem to have been the case anyway.

Ours is a community that has, earlier this decade, weathered a good measure of turbulence over precisely the issue of sexual orientation in public policy. There's no need to stir that up again, and Colorado for Family Values erred in doing just that. Then again, the city bears the onus as well.

university

heir opposition led to a historic July mail ballot question seeking to overhe council's approval of developplans. The measure failed. Classic s has since completed the project's hase and recently won approval for cond phase.

council is to consider the openurchase next month.

Rutledge covers city government and may ed at 476-1605 or rutledge@gazette.

Man sent to prison for shotgun incident

Associated Press

DENVER — A man who walking into a Colorado Springs post office and threatened an employee with a shotgun was sentenced to three years in federal prison on Wednesday.

Nathan Juhala, 47, earlier pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Denver to three counts of assault. A fourth charge, possession of a firearm on postal property, was dropped in the plea agreement.

The shotgun was not loaded in the incident on Dec. 8, 1997, at the Ivywild postal station on South Wahsatch Avenue.

Investigators said Juhala was upset that after several attempts to get his mail delivered to a post office box it was still being delivered to his home.

When a clerk went to locate a supervisor, Juhala left and returned with a shotgun and shotgun shells, investigators said.

CORRECTION

The obituary for Gary Chase that appeared in Wednesday's edition contained inaccurate information. Mr. Chase is survived by his wife, Judy Ann Adams; two daughters, Sandra Richey and Yvette Wilson; his mother, Wilma "Billie" Case; a stepson, Richard; a half-sister, Laurie Smith; his stepmother, Pearl Chase; his former wife, Nancy Chase; and three grandsons.

SERVICES TODAY

Chase, Gary, 2 p.m. Garden of the Gods.

McNeil, Wilbur "Web," 2 p.m., Shrine of Remembrance "America the Beautiful" Chapel of Roses, 1730 E. Fountain Blvd.

Wing, Rose Lucile, 2 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 770 B Ave., Limon.

Lucas, Georgia R., 7 p.m., Shrine of Remembrance "America the Beautiful" Chapel of Roses, 1730 E. Fountain Blvd.

GUIDELINES

News obituaries are published free. The deadline for obituary forms and photographs is 2:30 p.m. for the next day's edition. The fax number is 636-0202 or call 636-0221. Please include the name and phone number of the funeral home handling arrangements and the names and phone numbers of two family members who can confirm information.

Paid obituaries are handled by the advertising department. The deadline is 1 p.m. Monday through Saturday for the next day's edition. The fax number is 636-0122 or call 636-0319 for rates.

JOSEPH D. FITZGERALD

70, of Colorado Springs, CO, died, Monday, December 14, 1998 at the Veterans Administration medical Center, Denver. Born in Maple Shade, NJ, he was a long-time resident of Tillamook, OR, residing in Colorado Springs for two years. A World War II

THE RECORD

BULLETIN BOARD

■ **PET PICTURES:** Sunnyside Veterinary Clinic and the ALIE Foundation will hold a pet pictures session with Santa Claus from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday at Sunnyside Veterinary Clinic, 1607 N. Circle Drive. Cost is a donation to benefit the ALIE Foundation.

■ **TURKEY DRIVE:** The Salvation Army needs hundreds of turkeys this Christmas to help provide holiday food baskets to the less fortunate. Turkeys can be brought to the Salvation Army, 908 Yuma St. Cash donations can be mailed to The Salvation Army, P.O. Box 9947, Colorado Springs, 80932. For more information, call 636-3891, Ext. 10.

■ **AFTER-HOURS CLINIC:** The Memorial Hospital after-hours clinic, 501 N. Foote Ave., between Boulder Street and Willamette Avenue, holiday hours will be: 4 to 8:30 p.m., Christmas Eve; 4 to 10 p.m., Christmas Day; 4 to 8:30 p.m., New Year's Eve; and noon to 8 p.m., New Year's Day.

The clinic's nonholiday hours are: 6 to 10:30 p.m., weekdays; and 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., weekends.

For more information, call 444-CARE.

■ **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:** El Paso County commissioners need citizen volunteers to fill the following vacancies on advisory boards and committees.

A community-at-large and an agricultural representative are needed for the Colorado State University Cooperative Extension advisory board; the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments' community advisory committee has a vacancy for a citizen representative; an El Paso County special district representative is needed for the 911 Emergency Response Center Authority Board; and the Placement Alternative Commission needs two family members who have been involved with the Human Service Systems to use their experience to help effect positive change in the delivery of services.

People interested in filling one of these spots should send a letter of interest and brief resume to: Board of County Commissioners, 27 E. Vermijo Ave., Colorado Springs 80903. Deadline for application is Dec. 31.

For more information, call 520-6426.

■ **HELP FOR LEGAL AID:** Pikes Peak/Arkansas River Legal Aid, which provides free legal assistance to low-income people and seniors, needs donations to sell at a fund-raising garage sale scheduled for Jan. 23.

Donations are tax-deductible. For more information, call 471-0380, ext. 129 or 134.

BIRTHS

SPRINGS CENTER FOR WOMEN

Eason: John and Gail, Colorado Springs, a girl, Nov. 28.
Steele: Christy, Colorado Springs, a girl, Dec. 1.
Williams: Sidney and Gaye, Colorado Springs, a boy, Dec. 1.
Beatty-Hindman: Roland Beatty and Michelle Hindman, Colorado Springs, a boy, Dec. 2.
Bowen: James and Sandra, Colorado Springs, a girl, Dec. 3.
Brick: William III and Samantha, Colorado Springs, a girl, Dec. 3.
Jaramito-Abeyta: Jeremy Jaramito and Monica Abeyta, Colorado Springs, a boy, Dec. 3.
Cases: Pablo and Susan, Colorado Springs, a girl, Dec. 4.
Lopez-Vigil: Richard Lopez and Bobbi Vigil, Colorado Springs, a